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English views on Lombard city communes and their conflicts with Emperor Frederick Barbarossa*

[A head]Introduction

In the preface to his edition of the chronicle of Roger of Howden, William Stubbs briefly noted how well English chronicles covered the conflicts between Emperor Frederick Barbarossa and the Lombard cities.¹ Unfortunately, neither Stubbs nor his

* I wish to thank Bill Aird, Anne Duggan, Judith Green, Elisabeth Van Houts and the referees of *Quaderni Storici* for their suggestions and comments on earlier drafts of this work.

Abbreviations

<i>Canterbury</i>	<i>The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury</i> , vol. 1, London 1879.
CTB	<i>The Correspondence of Thomas Becket</i> , ed. A. Duggan, 2 vols, Oxford 2000.
<i>Diceto</i>	<i>The Historical works of Ralph of Diceto</i> , ed. W. Stubbs, London 1876.
<i>Howden Gesta</i>	<i>Gesta regis Henrici secundi Benedicti abbatis: The Chronicle of the Reigns of Henry II and Richard I, AD 1169–1192</i> , ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols, London 1867.
<i>Howden Chronica</i>	<i>Chronica Rogeri de Houdenne</i> , ed. W. Stubbs, 4 vols, London 1868.
JohnS, <i>Letters</i> , ii	<i>The Letters of John of Salisbury</i> , vol. 2, ed. W. J. Millor and C. N. L. Brooke, Oxford 1979.
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i> .
<i>Newburgh</i>	William of Newburgh, <i>Historia rerum anglicarum</i> , in <i>Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I</i> , I, ed. R. Howlett, London 1884.
<i>Niger</i>	<i>Radulfi Nigri Chronica universali</i> , ed. R. Pauli and F. Liebermann, MGH Scriptores in folio, 27, Hanover 1885.
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> .
<i>Tilbury</i>	Gervase of Tilbury, <i>Otia imperialia</i> , ed. S. E. Banks and J. W. Binns, Oxford 2002.

successors expanded on this remark. Yet, as we shall see, it was justified and could be applied to other English sources as well, as they often provide unique evidence.

However, only a fragment of that evidence has made it into the secondary literature, and even then its English provenance is usually barely acknowledged, if not ignored altogether. The best example is a letter sent by the Milanese to the Bolognese announcing victory at the Battle of Legnano in 1176: since the nineteenth century the letter has often featured in the secondary literature, but attention has never been paid to the fact that it only survives thanks to its insertion in the work of Ralph of Diceto.

The exploration of this English evidence offers a different perspective on what was certainly a momentous confrontation and allows us to evaluate how much attention it attracted beyond the borders of the empire. At the same time, such an investigation will provide a tantalising window onto the transmission and exchange of ideas and the degree of knowledge of current affairs across Western Europe in the second half of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth. Indeed, England (and the ‘Angevin empire’ to which it belonged, that is, the collection of territories stretching from the British Isles to southern France ruled by the Angevin dynasty) and Lombardy were not neighbours. They also featured very different political settings: England presenting a powerful royal government over territories characterised by a moderate level of urbanisation, and Lombardy a world of city communes under the distant hegemony of the emperor. There were parallels that are worth noting, though. Both Barbarossa (1152–1190) and his contemporary Henry II (1154–1189) were engaged in the restoration, enhancement and better conceptualisation of central

Torigni *The Chronicle of Robert of Torigni, in Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Torigni: Richard I*, vol. 4, ed. R. Howlett, London 1889.

¹ *Howden Chronica*, p. xciv.

government in their respective territories (the former in Italy and the latter in England after the so-called anarchy of King Stephen's reign).² In addition, those rulers were both embroiled in major conflicts with ecclesiastical authority, the former with Pope Alexander III and the latter with the archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket. Finally, there is an ethnic dimension to consider: in England, the divide between the English and their Norman conquerors had not yet disappeared, and English sources did not fail to notice the role that the Lombard–German divide played under Barbarossa.

This article aims to provide a more systematic analysis of that English evidence by charting what it covered and attracted its interest the most, investigating and making some suggestions, when possible, on why that was the case, and exploring how information regarding Lombard affairs was sourced. It starts from the historical works of Robert of Torigni (abbot of Mont Saint-Michel in Normandy, but usually included in surveys of English historical works), and encompasses works by the Augustinian canon William of Newburgh, the secular clerks Ralph of Diceto (dean of Saint Paul's in London), Roger of Howden and Ralph Niger, the Benedictine Gervase of Canterbury, the eclectic Gervase of Tilbury, as well as the account of an English eyewitness of the Peace of Venice of 1177. It then moves to the work and correspondence of John of Salisbury and that of Thomas Becket. The second part of the article will explore the ways in which information about Lombard affairs was transmitted through and across countries, and will expand on the possible reasons

² For the latest interpretation of Barbarossa's reign: K. Görich, *Friedrich Barbarossa. Eine Biographie*, Munich, 2011. For a comparison of the judicial powers and functions of Henry II and Barbarossa: B. Weiler, 'The king as judge: Henry II and Frederick Barbarossa as seen by their contemporaries', in *Challenging the Boundaries of Medieval History: The Legacy of Timothy Reuter*, ed. P.J. Skinner, Turnhout, 2009, pp. 115–41.

behind English interest in them by pointing to the negotiations that were undertaken to transfer the kingdom of Italy to the Angevin royal house.

[A head]The historical works

Of the above-mentioned historical works, three are particularly rich in references to Lombard affairs. They are, in chronological order, the world history of Robert of Torigni, William of Newburgh's *Historia rerum anglicarum* and Ralph of Diceto's *Ymages historiarum*, on which their authors continued to work until their deaths, which took place, respectively, around 1186, 1198 and 1202. The works of other authors, such as the chronicle of Ralph Niger (produced in the 1190s) and Gervase of Tilbury's *Otia imperialia* (completed around 1214) include brief overviews of the conflict between the Lombard cities and Barbarossa. Other works focus on specific events, such as the Battle of Legnano in the case of Roger of Howden's *Gesta Henrici II* and his *Chronica* (which were composed respectively before and after 1192), or the destruction of Milan in 1162 in Gervase of Canterbury's *Chronica* (whose author continued the narrative until his death in 1210). The report of the English eyewitness of the Peace of Venice, whose extant version is from around 1200, can be placed between the last two categories, because it strived to contextualise the event that it wished to record. Overall, although some of their authors lived during the reign of Henry II, and, as we shall see, some of them spent time in Italy during the clashes between Barbarossa and the Lombards, all the historical works here considered, except for that of Robert of Torigni, were completed during the reign of Richard I (1189–1199) or in the early years of John's (1199–1216).

Apart from the works that focus on specific episodes, most cover a similar range of events. They generally ignored the Diet of Roncaglia of 1158, where

Barbarossa developed and publicised his programme for the restoration of imperial authority in Italy, as well as the final settlement between the emperor and the Lombards at the Peace of Constance in 1183. English historical works rather covered the clashes between the emperor and the cities up to the period immediately before the Peace of Venice of 1177, which settled the conflict between Barbarossa and Pope Alexander III. Most of them reported the destruction of Milan in 1162, the resulting temporary imperial dominance over northern Italy, the uprising that led to the formation of the Lombard League in 1167, the siege of Alessandria in 1175 and the Battle of Legnano in 1176. The Peace of Venice of 1177 is ubiquitous, but the Lombard involvement in it is usually overlooked. The League itself is never mentioned by name (*Societas Lombardie*), those works rather referring to the *Longobardie civitates* or the *Longobardi/Lombardi*, but the same largely applied to Italian and German sources.

Then again, the English works show a good awareness of the outline of Barbarossa's policy towards northern Italy and of how a compromise was eventually reached that was favourable to the Lombard cities but recognised imperial superiority. The views on Barbarossa's policy will be examined later but, regarding the final outcomes of his conflict with the Lombard cities, Ralph Niger wrote that, in the end, the Lombards 'obtained more freedom' (*'maio rem libertatem evicerunt'*), which implies that a deal was reached.³ Referring to the period after the Peace of Venice, Diceto included the Lombards among Barbarossa's subjects.⁴ Both William of

³ Niger, p. 335.

⁴ Diceto, pp. 426–7.

Newburgh and Gervase of Tilbury called Barbarossa's son, Henry VI, '*rex Longobardie*', while Roger of Howden described Milan as one of Henry's cities.⁵

Even though such authors cover a similar range of events, and despite the existence of links between some of the works here considered, they tackled Lombard affairs differently, and often provided varying details. Roger of Howden, for example, was generally one of William of Newburgh's main written sources.⁶ That, however, did not apply to his account of Lombard affairs: while Roger focused only on the Battle of Legnano, William omitted it from his work. Likewise, Robert of Torigni was the principal source of Ralph of Diceto's *Ymagines historiarum* for the period of the clashes between Barbarossa and the Lombard cities.⁷ Yet Robert interwove his account of Lombard-imperial relations from 1158 to 1176 with other events, starting from one of the sieges of Milan and ending with the Battle of Legnano, which he reported on quite briefly. Ralph of Diceto's account of Lombard affairs, instead, started with a reference to the siege of Alessandria of 1175, but was mainly focused on a digression triggered by the Battle of Legnano; he then mentioned how, in 1178, Barbarossa left Lombardy when he realised that he could not overcome the Lombards, and finally included the Lombards among Barbarossa's subjects while referring to the 1180s.⁸ On the other hand, Diceto ignored the rebellion of the Veronese March in 1164, which, among the works examined here, that of Robert of Torigni was virtually unique in emphasising. A Lombard-themed digression is also found in the work of

⁵ Newburgh, p. 286; Tilbury, pp. 460–1; Howden *Chronica*, III, p. 164.

⁶ J. Gillingham, *Royal newsletters, forgeries and English historians: some links between court and history in the reign of Richard I*, in *La cour Plantagenêt (1154-1204)*, ed. M. Aurel, Poitiers, 2000, p. 180.

⁷ J. F. A. Mason, *Diceto, Ralph de (d/ 1199/1200)*, in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7591>, accessed 27 June 2013.

⁸ *Diceto*, pp. 408–9, 427.

William of Newburgh, but it was triggered by the destruction of Milan in 1162; he then interlaced Lombard affairs with the rest of his chronicle, although only until the siege of Alessandria of 1175.⁹ The anonymous eyewitness of the Peace of Venice and Gervase of Tilbury both portrayed Barbarossa's Lombard troubles while sketching the background of that peace conference.¹⁰ Yet, as mentioned, none of the other works connected the Peace of Venice with the Lombards directly, apart from a letter that Roger of Howden inserted in his works in which the pope announced the event to the English clergy.¹¹ Gervase of Canterbury only reported in passing the fall of Milan in 1162.¹² Ralph Niger left a brief overview that mentioned Barbarossa's early victories against Milan, his brief dominance and his reliance on '*principes clerici*' (naming Rainald of Dassel, Christian of Mainz and Philip of Cologne) to rule Lombardy, and, in very general terms, the rebellion of the Lombards.¹³ As we shall see, the variety of information found in these works was probably due to the multiple channels by which news travelled to the Angevin empire.

The Battle of Legnano, which was a turning point in the conflict between the emperor and the Lombard cities, featured prominently in many of the works here considered.¹⁴ The most remarkable account is certainly that by Ralph of Diceto. After stating that the Lombards rushed to meet the emperor near the River Ticino on '*IV Kalendas Iunii*', he explained the outcome of the battle by inserting a letter in which the Milanese announced the victory to the Bolognese, thus preserving a very rare surviving example of epistolary exchange between city communes from this period.

⁹ *Newburgh*, p. 115.

¹⁰ Thomson, *An English Eyewitness*, pp. 29–30.

¹¹ *Howden Chronica*, pp. 101, 141–2.

¹² *Canterbury*, pp. 265–9.

¹³ *Niger*, p. 335.

¹⁴ On the battle: P. Grillo, *Legnano 1176. Una battaglia per la libertà*, Bari, 2010.

The date that Ralph of Diceto provided for the battle is the same as that featured in contemporary Milanese and Placentine accounts, but it did not appear in the Milanese letter that he transcribed in his work.¹⁵ Roger of Howden also focused on the Battle of Legnano, covering themes similar to those of Diceto's Milanese letter, with information on the many prisoners, including Barbarossa's standard-bearer, who were captured by the Lombards; he also provided the same chronological indication as Diceto, but other, albeit equally correct, geographical coordinates, stating that the battle took place between Como and Milan near a place called '*securum*'. Although it is not certain, it is likely this refers to the district of Seprio (*Seprium* in Latin). If this is the case, this account would be remarkably correct but also unique, because none of the other sources on the battle reported that location.¹⁶ His *Chronica*, while, in the main, simply rephrasing the account previously featured in his *Gesta*, omitted the latter's chronological reference to '*IV Kalendas Iunii*'.¹⁷ Before Roger of Howden and Ralph of Diceto, Robert of Torigni had simply stated how, on that occasion, Barbarossa barely managed to flee from the battlefield, attributing the victory to the Lombards as a whole, but especially to Milan, and wrongly placing it as having taken place in 1177.¹⁸ The Battle of Legnano can also be spotted in the general references to the military events that took place after the siege of Alessandria in the work of

¹⁵ *Diceto*, pp. 408–9. For the Italian sources: *Annales Mediolanenses*, ed. G. H. Pertz, in MGH, *Scriptores in folio*, 18, Hannover, 1863, pp. 378–9, 385; *Iohannis Codagnelli Annales Placentini*, in MGH, *Scriptores rer. Germ.*, 23, ed. O. Holder-Egger, Hannover and Lipsia, 1901, p. 11.

¹⁶ *Howden Chronica*, p. 101.

¹⁷ On the relationship between the *Gesta* and the *Chronica*: David Corner, 'The earliest surviving manuscript of Roger of Howden's "Chronica"', *English Historical Review*, 98 (1983), pp. 297–310; id., 'The *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi* and *Chronica* of Roger, parson of Howden', in *Historical Research*, 56 (1983), pp. 126–44.

¹⁸ *Torigni*, p. 270.

Gervase of Tilbury as well as in the report of the anonymous eyewitness of the Peace of Venice, but Gervase confused it with the events that led to the Truce of Montebello in 1175.¹⁹

Overall, Milan is by far the most cited Lombard city, reflecting its status of main opponent of Barbarossa in the region, and its destruction in 1162 attracted particular attention. Robert of Torigni recorded that the city fell because of famine and that some religious buildings were spared.²⁰ According to Ralph of Diceto, Barbarossa not only stripped the city of valuables, but also condemned Milan to ‘*maxima capitis diminutione*’, which, in Roman law, refers to the extinction of all legal capacity.²¹ Before the siege, William of Newburgh recorded that the Milanese had retrenched into their city, strengthened its defences and demolished the suburbs in order to provide no advantage to Barbarossa; all in vain: despite its obstinate resistance, the city eventually fell and the emperor razed it to the ground, but did not wipe out the Milanese people because they had surrendered.²² The account by Gervase of Tilbury was along similar lines.²³ Various works reported the translation of the relics of the three Magi from Milan to Cologne, ‘to the grief of the Lombards’, according to William of Newburgh.²⁴ Robert of Torigni’s account of that translation is actually one of the earliest solid references to the presence of those relics in Milan.²⁵ Yet various other events regarding Milan were mentioned too. William of Newburgh

¹⁹ *Tilbury*, pp. 460–1; Thomson, *An English Eyewitness*, pp. 29–30.

²⁰ *Torigni*, p. 213.

²¹ *Diceto*, p. 408; A. Berger, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law*, Philadelphia, 1953, p. 381.

²² *Newburgh*, p. 115.

²³ *Tilbury*, pp. 460–1.

²⁴ *Newburgh*, p. 115; *Torigni*, pp. 199, 220; *Canterbury*, p. 205; *Tilbury*, pp. 460–1.

²⁵ P. J. Geary, *Living with the dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1994), 243–57.

briefly examined its leadership in the region prior to the coming of Barbarossa.²⁶

Robert of Torigni mentioned three imperial sieges, as well as the reconstruction of Milan in 1167 and its leading involvement at Legnano.²⁷ Diceto noted that Milan was the most troublesome of all the Lombard cities to Barbarossa, and then he reported on its reconstruction, its role in the uprising that nullified Barbarossa's achievements and the above-mentioned letter to the Bolognese.²⁸ The anonymous eyewitness of the Peace of Venice focused his account on Milan, conflating several events into one, while Gervase of Tilbury, like Robert of Torigni, attributed the victory of Legnano to Milan.²⁹

However, English historical works mentioned many other cities as well, including Pavia, Piacenza, Ravenna, Genoa, Vercelli, Susa, Asti, Brescia, Verona, Como, Tortona and Crema. After Milan, Alessandria attracted the most attention, no doubt because of the symbolic role it played against Barbarossa. Robert of Torigni explained that the '*Longobardi*' built it not far from Vercelli, that it was named after Alexander III, that every Lombard city sent settlers, and that its siege brought only sorrow and hardship to the emperor, leading to a round of negotiations that failed because the emperor wished to disband Alessandria and the Lombards categorically refused to accept this; Barbarossa consequently retreated to Pavia.³⁰ According to Ralph of Diceto, the Lombards built Alessandria to challenge Barbarossa; he then mentions the siege.³¹ William of Newburgh reported the foundation of Alessandria too, noting that it was strategically placed to intercept attacks from Germany, that it

²⁶ *Newburgh*, p. 115.

²⁷ *Torigni*, pp. 195, 201, 231, 270.

²⁸ *Diceto*, pp. 408–9.

²⁹ Thomson, *An English Eyewitness*, pp. 29–30; *Tilbury*, pp. 460–1.

³⁰ *Torigni*, pp. 239–40, 266–7.

³¹ *Diceto*, p. 397.

was named after the pope, to whom its inhabitants pledged loyalty, attributing to that the reason for Barbarossa's siege, which fruitlessly wore his army down and strengthened the morale of his opponents.³² None of the contemporary northern Italian chronicles are as informative.³³

Indeed, English historians of this period showed a good awareness of the political geography of northern Italy as a whole. Robert of Torigni provided a sketch of its political and religious configuration, with three archdioceses (Milan, Ravenna and Genoa) and twenty-five cities.³⁴ Ralph Niger correctly named Asti, Tortona and Crema among the allies of Milan before 1162.³⁵ According to Robert of Torigni, in 1158 to 1159 the emperor besieged Milan but also destroyed the towers of Piacenza and Pavia; in reality the latter was an imperial supporter, and later Robert noted this, as did Diceto and William of Newburgh.³⁶ Concerning the uprisings that gave birth to the Lombard League, Diceto correctly named Milan, Piacenza, Brescia and Verona among the rebels, while all the other historians simply attributed the uprising to the Lombards in general.³⁷ Asti and Vercelli were still supporting the emperor when Robert of Torigni and Diceto stated that they did.³⁸ The fullest account, though, is certainly the one from William of Newburgh's digression on the situation prior to the destruction of Milan. It has generally passed unnoticed, but, with its focus on the

³² *Newburgh*, p. 144.

³³ For the sources on the foundation of Alessandria: E. Coleman, 'A city to be built for the glory of God, St Peter and the whole of Lombardy': *Alexander III, Alessandria and the Lombard League in contemporary sources*, in *Pope Alexander III. The Art of Survival*, ed. P. Clarke and A. Duggan, Farnham, 2012, pp. 127–52.

³⁴ *Torigni*, p. 222.

³⁵ *Niger*, p. 335.

³⁶ *Torigni*, pp. 201, 231; *Diceto*, p. 408; *Newburgh*, p. 144.

³⁷ *Diceto*, p. 408; *Torigni*, p. 231; *Newburgh*, p. 144.

³⁸ *Diceto*, p. 408.

Lombards' organisation in numerous and powerful cities, their consciousness and protectiveness of their liberty, their restless and warlike attitude, their divisions, the bossy attitude of Milan and the weak imperial rule, it recalls, albeit in a more concise way, the much more celebrated and earlier lines on the Lombard cities left by the German Otto of Freising.³⁹ We will examine possible German connections later.

These works also generally addressed the reasons for the confrontation too, and the term *libertas*, vis-à-vis the tyrannical rule of Barbarossa and his German followers, was certainly a common topos. This reflected contemporary Lombard arguments, whose propositions (from the defence of immunities it enjoyed, to freedom from encroachment and arbitrary innovations) were not alien to contemporaneous English audiences, especially in the light of Henry II's enhancement of royal government, which his immediate successors strengthened further.⁴⁰ This applied particularly, but not only, to the clerical audience: a category to

³⁹ *Newburgh*, p. 115: 'Iisdem fere temporibus Fredericus Teutonicus atque Italicus imperator Mediolanum, urbem opum viriumque suarum fiducia diu rebellem, expugnavit, cepit, evertit. Et quidem Longobardi gens inquieta et bellicosa, immoderatae libertatis aemula, et tam numero urbium quam magnitudine virium superba, ante annos plurimos ab imperatore Romano magna ex parte desciverat: sed dum inter se amplissimae civitates de prioratu disceptarent, atque aliae aliis imperare cuperent, imperatorias contra se vires auxerunt. Denique Mediolanenses, opibus viribusque praecellentes, totius Longobardiae affectabant imperium ; jamque aliquot urbes subegerant, quasdam etiam rebelles everterant, cum Papienses viribus quidem impares, sed tamen eorum imperium aspernantes, ad partes imperatorias se transtulerunt. Quorum exemplum secutae urbes ceterae, in foedus imperatoris venerunt. Aggressurus ergo Mediolanenses, defectu omnium sociorum remissius jam agentes, imperator vires imperii contrahebat. Illi quoque dominandi libidinem in tuendae libertatis constantiam convertentes, totis se opibus adversus imperatoris inpetus muniebant'. Cf., *Ottonis et Rahewini Gesta Friderici I Imperatoris*, ed. G. Waitz, in *MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum* 46 (Hannover and Leipzig, 1912), pp. 396–7.

⁴⁰ G. Raccagni, *The Lombard League 1167-1225*, Oxford, 2010, pp. 137–46; J. C. Holt, *Magna Carta*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, 1992, pp. 23–74; J. Green, 'Forest laws in England and

which all the authors here considered belonged.⁴¹ After all, Magna Carta pledged to safeguard the ‘*libertates*’ of the English Church, but also granted ‘*libertates*’ to all free men of the realm.⁴² Like Barbarossa, Henry was certainly not keen on municipal self-government, and the best example of his view comes from London.⁴³ Richard of Devizes (a Benedictine monk and chronicler of the reign of Richard I) commented that neither Henry nor his son Richard would willingly have allowed London to have a commune for a million silver marks, thus underlining his own great distaste for communes by describing them as the pride of common people, the dread of the kingdom and the ferment of the priesthood.⁴⁴ London had formed a commune during Stephen’s troubled reign, and it formed one again after Henry’s death, in the 1190s, during Richard’s I absence on crusade (Devizes did not fail to notice that this happened during the king’s absence), which the bishops and secular magnates of the region swore to maintain in the course of an assembly held at St Paul’s in 1191 (thus Ralph of Diceto must have known about it).⁴⁵ London then came to play an important role in the making of Magna Carta, which, in 1215, confirmed its ‘*antiquas libertates*’ specifically, as well as those of all the other urban centres, its mayor being the only representative of a city among the twenty-five great men appointed to oversee the

Normancy in the twelfth century’, *Historical Research*, 86 (2013), pp. 416–31; K. Stringer, ‘States, liberties and communities in medieval Britain and Ireland (c. 1000-1400)’, in *Liberties and Identities in the Medieval British Isles*, ed. M. Prestwich, Woodbridge, 2008, pp. 5–36; W. L. Warren, *Henry II*, London, 1973, pp. 241–398.

⁴¹ Crick, ‘Pristina Libertas: liberty and the Anglo-Saxons revisited’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 14 (2004), pp. 47–71.

⁴² Holt, *Magna Carta*, pp. 448–51.

⁴³ J. Cambbell, *Power and authority 600-1300*, in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, ed. D. M. Palliser, Cambridge, 2000, pp. 67, 68, 75.

⁴⁴ *The chronicle of Richard of Devizes*, ed. J. T. Appleby, London, 1963, p. 49.

⁴⁵ Cambbell, *Power and Authority*, p. 75; C. Brooke, *London 800-1216: The Shaping of a City*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975, pp. 45–6

execution of the charter.⁴⁶ In some ways this was the mirror image of the Lombard League, which at the time of the Peace of Constance counted around twenty cities and one major lord, that is, the marquess Malaspina.⁴⁷ Indeed, the period during which most of the works here examined were produced witnessed a great flourishing of royal grants to urban centres and municipal self-government across England, although the level of their autonomy was certainly not comparable to that of their Lombard counterparts.⁴⁸ Scholarship has long debated whether such developments were evolutionary or the result of the introduction of new elements with foreign origins.⁴⁹

Some of the works here studied, however, showed awareness of the exceptional degree of the *libertas* of the Lombard cities vis-à-vis the authority of the emperor and of their distinctive protectiveness of it, issues which were not necessarily met with full approval. William of Newburgh, for example, described as ‘*immoderata*’ the *libertas* that the Lombards had achieved before Barbarossa, when, he explained, they had largely freed themselves from the emperor. Negative overtones could be spotted in his work that would be confirmed by other adjectives William used for the Lombard ‘*gens*’, that is, ‘*inquieta*’, ‘*bellicosa*’ and ‘*superba*’.⁵⁰ On the other hand, he then ‘redeemed’ the Milanese and the Lombards by noting how the former converted ‘the desire of dominion into an obstinate defence of liberty’ and that the latter recovered their ancient liberty by rebelling against Barbarossa’s high-

⁴⁶ Holt, *Magna Carta*, pp. 53–6, 455.

⁴⁷ For the role of lords in the Lombard League: Raccagni, *Lombard League*, pp. 65–73.

⁴⁸ Campbell, *Power and Authority*, pp. 69–70; S. Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe 900–1300*, 2nd edition, Oxford, 1997, pp. 155–218.

⁴⁹ Campbell, *Power and Authority*, p. 70.

⁵⁰ Newburgh, p. 115

handed treatment and ‘the German yoke’.⁵¹ Was there an echo of the Norman conquest of England, which earlier Anglo-Norman historians such as Orderic Vitalis (d. c.1142) had described in terms of an intolerable and unaccustomed Norman yoke and English loss of liberty?⁵² Criticism of the Norman conquest can certainly be found in the work of ‘a self-confidently English writer’ such as William of Newburgh.⁵³ By the beginning of the thirteenth century the sense still survived of the English and the Normans as two separate people, the former subjugated to the latter.⁵⁴

Other authors were less balanced and more favourable to the Lombards. Ralph Niger mentioned the anger of the Lombards against the insolence and oppression of Barbarossa and the Germans, and their success in obtaining ‘*maiores libertatem*’.⁵⁵ The account of Ralph of Diceto was, however, far more developed. He stated that Barbarossa invaded Italy in order to ‘cast his name above those of all the other magnates of the earth’, but he found his main obstacle in Milan, which enjoyed immunity from extraordinary obligations, was conscious of its *libertas* and thus refused to acknowledge more than the customary ‘*fodrum*’.⁵⁶ Diceto then identified in Barbarossa’s following actions the drive that convinced the people of Milan,

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 115, 144: ‘*Cum enim in Longobardos insolentius ageret, illi jugum Alemannicum non ferentes, in libertatem se pristinam receperunt*’.

⁵² *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall, Oxford, 1968-80, vol. 4, p. 202.

⁵³ H. M. Thomas, *The English and the Normans: Ethnic Hostility, Assimilation and Identity, 1066- c.1220*, Oxford, 2005, pp. 363, 389.

⁵⁴ M. T. Clanchy, *England and its Rulers 1066-1272*, 2nd edn, Oxford, 1998, pp. 31-4; J. Gillingham, *Slaves to the Normans? Gerald de Barri and regnal solidarity in early thirteenth-century England*, in *Law, Laity and Solidarities. Essays in Honour of Susan Reynolds*, Manchester, 2001, pp. 160-71.

⁵⁵ Niger, p. 335: ‘*Veruntamen insolentiam Theotonicorum non diu sustinuerunt Lumbardi; unde et apud eundem imperatorem, explosis oppressionibus, maiores libertatem evicerunt*’.

⁵⁶ Diceto, p. 408.

Piacenza, Brescia and Verona of the necessity of defending the ‘*libertas*’ of their fatherland with their life.⁵⁷ The reference to the *fodrum*, a tax paid in money when the emperor was in Italy, usually during his coronation journey to Rome, betrays a good knowledge of the Italian situation.⁵⁸ The same applies to the reference to pre-Barbarossa customary practices, which reflected the arguments that the Lombard cities themselves deployed against the emperor.⁵⁹ As we shall see, the same points can be found in a letter to Thomas Becket, but the anonymous eyewitness of the Peace of Venice also underlined Barbarossa’s introduction of grievous and previously unheard of customs (‘*importunas et antea inauditas consuetudines*’).⁶⁰ Once again, very similar preoccupations can be found in England in the build-up to Magna Carta.⁶¹ The Lombard cities identified, in the accession of Fredrick Barbarossa, the divide between valid customs and unlawful arbitrary innovations.⁶² For the English barons who forced Magna Carta on the king that divide was the accession of Henry II.⁶³ Lastly, Diceto’s reference to ‘*munera extraordinaria*’, as well as the above-mentioned one on the extinction of Milan’s legal capacity, point to some knowledge of Roman law terminology. We will return to the influence of Roman law in England and the links

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 408–9: ‘ut nomen sibi faceret ultra nomen magnorum qui sunt in terris, intravit Ytaliā in manu forti. Mediolanensium itaque civitatem, fodrum antiquitus institutum paratam agnoscere, sed recusantem aliud subire, minus pacienter audivit. Quam, quia munerum extraordinariorum immunitate gaudebat, quia se pristinae libertatis animabat in vocem vallavit obsidione’.

⁵⁸ On the *fodrum*: C. Brühl, *Fodrum, gistum, servitium regis : Studien zu den wirtschaftlichen Grundlagen des Königtums im Frankenreich und in den fränkischen Nachfolgestaaten Deutschland, Frankreich und Italien vom 6. bis zur Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts*, Köln, 1968.

⁵⁹ Raccagni, *The Lombard League*, pp. 137–46.

⁶⁰ Thomson, *An English Eyewitness*, pp. 29–30.

⁶¹ Holt, *Magna Carta*, pp. 75–122.

⁶² Raccagni, *The Lombard League*, pp. 137–46.

⁶³ Holt, *Magna Carta*, p. 115.

with the schools of Bologna later. At the same time, no English author mentioned the *Ius Italicum*, that is, the privileges that Italy had enjoyed within the Roman Empire. Traces of those privileges were found in the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* and they were quite popular among those in the Lombard intellectual elite who opposed Barbarossa's Italian endeavours, even if the role of customs and the desuetude of laws were certainly not unknown in that milieu either.⁶⁴

Not all English accounts used the term *libertas*, however, and this was most notably the case with Robert of Torigni, despite his lengthy and detailed coverage. He provided no reasons for Barbarossa's early clashes with Milan, but portrayed the city's destruction as a consequence of its rebellion against the emperor.⁶⁵ Negative overtones can be detected in his remark that Barbarossa subjected Lombardy to his will, which could hint to accusations of arbitrary and domineering rule, but positive ones when he immediately added that that had brought peace and security for natives and strangers as well as the restoration of royal revenues (*'fiscum regium'*), and even surprise when he noticed how, 'on the other hand', the cities of the Veronese March rebelled in 1164.⁶⁶ Moreover, Robert provided unique, and often ignored, evidence regarding the revenues that Barbarossa was collecting from northern Italy at the peak of his success in 1164, which, he stated, amounted to fifty thousand marks.⁶⁷ No similar data can be found in Italian sources, the only comparable one being the

⁶⁴ G. Raccagni, 'Reintroducing the emperor and repositioning the city republics in the 'republican' thought of the rhetorician Boncompagno da Signa', *Historical Research*, 86 (2013), 579–600.

⁶⁵ *Torigni*, p. 201.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 222: 'Fredericus imperator cum ad libitum subdisset sibi Langobardiam ... et fiscum regium ad L. milia marcarum summam in eodem regno reparasset, et pacem ibidem tam indigenis quam peregrinis reformasset: iterum Verona et quedam alie civitates adversus eum rebellant'.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

estimate of the gains that were expected to derive from the Diet of Roncaglia in 1158 according to the chronicle of Rahewin of Freising.⁶⁸ Finally, Robert criticised the imperial plenipotentiary in Italy, Christian of Mainz, by stating that he had not lived as a cleric but as a tyrant, leading armies and injuring the Roman Church, the men of Saint Peter and the Lombard cities: a view which reflected contemporary Lombard ones very closely.⁶⁹

As mentioned above, none of the works here examined mentioned the Diet of Roncaglia of 1158, but Robert of Torigni's account focused on its immediate aftermath, touched upon two central preoccupations of that diet, that is, the maintenance of peace and the enhancement of royal revenues, and it even echoed the rhetoric of works produced at the imperial court to describe Barbarossa's accomplishments. Godfrey of Viterbo, for example, made remarks that were almost identical to those of Robert of Torigni when he stated that Barbarossa enhanced royal peace and helped himself to suitable revenues (*'Regia pax crescit / rex digna tributa capescit'*).⁷⁰ Moreover, the restoration of the *'fiscus regius'* reflected and epitomised the main achievement of the Diet of Roncaglia, that is, the identification, with the help of the Bolognese lawyers and of judges from other Lombard cities, of a body of

⁶⁸ *Ottonis et Rahewini Gesta Friderici I. imperatoris*, in MGH, SS rer. Germ., 46, ed. G. Waitz, Hannover and Lipsia, 1912, p. 240.

⁶⁹ *Torigni*, p. 308. On the Lombard attitude towards Christian of Mainz: Raccagni, *The Lombard League*, pp. 34–6; in a work from 1201, Boncompagno da Signa described the imperial plenipotentiary as Christian just in name, stating that he laid waste to castles and villages in various regions, sought the property of others and lived by theft like a sparrowhawk and on carrion like a crow: Boncompagno da Signa, *L'assedio di Ancona. Liber de obsidione Ancone*, ed. and trans. P. Garbini, Rome, 1999, pp. 118–9.

⁷⁰ *Gotfredi Viterbiensis Gesta Friderici I. et Heinrici VI. imperatorum*, in MGH, Scriptores rer. Germ., 30, ed. G. H. Pertz, Hannover, 1870, p. 20.

royal rights (*regalia*).⁷¹ Indeed, the *fiscus* largely represented an embodiment of the Roman state in Roman law. Thus, Robert of Torigni's emphasis on Barbarossa's restoration of the *fiscus regius* probably also hints of the fact that the *libertas* of the Lombard cities mentioned by Robert's English colleagues included prerogatives that belonged to the emperor, as Barbarossa was keen to underline and the Lombard cities never fully denied.

Once again very similar issues and a similarly advanced conceptualisation of royal prerogatives can be found in the reign of Henry II, but they predated the Diet of Roncaglia. Robert of Torigni himself, for example, reported how in 1155 Henry recovered cities, castles and lands 'that belonged to the crown of the kingdom', destroyed new fortifications and deposed '*pseudo comites*' to whom King Stephen had recklessly conferred almost all the prerogatives that belonged to the '*fiscus*'.⁷² Contemporary English thinking already entertained the concept of '*iura et libertates corone regni*'.⁷³ Henry then continued the consolidation of his rule throughout his reign.⁷⁴ Roman law probably influenced, at least terminologically, the conceptualisation of the English royal prerogatives, but it must be specified that the

⁷¹ E. Conte, 'Diritto romano e fiscalità imperiale nel XII secolo', *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il medioevo*, 106 (2004), pp. 169–206.

⁷² Torigni, p. 183: 'Rex Henricus coepit revocare in jus proprium urbes, castella, villas, quae ad coronam regni pertinebant, castella noviter facta destruendo, et expellendo de regno maxime Flandrenses; et deponendo quosdam imaginarios et pseudocomites, quibus rex Stephanus omnia pene ad fiscum pertinentia minus caute distribuerat'.

⁷³ Host, *Magna Carta*, 118–9.

⁷⁴ N. Barratt, 'Finance and economy in the reign of Henry II', in *Henry II. New Interpretations*, ed. C. Harper-Hill and N. Vincent, Woodbridge, 2007, pp. 242–56; G. J. White, *Restoration and Reform, 1153–1165. Recovery from Civil War in England*, Cambridge, 2000.

Latin term *fiscus*, in its full Roman meaning, had been known in England for a very long time.⁷⁵

Indeed, while his colleagues criticised the excessive autonomy of the Lombard cities, but, overall, looked at their cause with sympathy, Robert of Torigni seems to have rather sympathised with Barbarossa's programme, which might have had something to do with Robert's closeness to the English royal court.⁷⁶ No reference to *libertas*, or any explanation for the rebellion of the Lombards, can be found in the work of a faithful royal agent such as Roger of Howden either.⁷⁷ The authors who referred to the *libertas* of the Lombards tended to be more distant from the royal court. William of Newburgh spent his life in his priory.⁷⁸ Ralph Niger was exiled from England for several years, probably because of his support for Becket.⁷⁹ Ralph of Diceto was very well connected to the court, but his stance was generally well

⁷⁵ *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, IV (Oxford, 1989), 954; for the study of Roman law in England and the scholarly debate over its influence: J. Brundage, 'The managerial revolution in the English Church', in *Magna Carta and the England of King John*, ed. J. S. Loengard, Woodbridge, 2010, pp. 83–98; J. Hudson, *Magna Carta, the ius commune, and English common law*, in *Magna Carta and the England of King John*, pp. 151–167.

⁷⁶ E. M. C. van Houts, 'Le roi et son historien: Henri II Plantagenêt et Robert de Torigni abbé du Mont-Saint-Michel', *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale, Xe-XIIe siècles*, 37 (1994), pp. 115–118.

⁷⁷ J. Gillingham, *Writing the biography of Roger of Howden king's clerk and chronicler*, in *Writing Medieval Biography, 750-1250: Essays in Honour of Professor Frank Barlow*, ed. D. Bates, J. Crick and S. Hamilton, Woodbridge, 2006, pp. 207–20.

⁷⁸ J. Taylor, *Newburgh, William of (b. 1135/6, d. in or after 1198)*, in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29470>, accessed 27 June 2013; Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, pp. 264–8.

⁷⁹ A. J. Duggan, *Niger, Ralph (b. c.1140, d. in or before 1199?)*, in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20192>, accessed 27 June 2013.

balanced, as testified by his treatment of the Becket affair, which Robert of Torigni largely ignored.⁸⁰

Finally, there is little doubt that the central role played by Lombard affairs in the conflict between empire and papacy was the main reason they attracted the attention of the authors here examined, who, after all, were clerics. Their works paid little attention to Lombard affairs before the reign of Barbarossa, and the same applies to the period after the Peace of Venice. At the same time, they made surprisingly little direct connection between Barbarossa's Lombard campaigns and his troubles with the papacy. However, they often showed awareness that the former predated the latter: Robert of Torigni came to link them only when he reported the events regarding Alessandria; William of Newburgh painted his sketch of the situation in Lombardy well before he mentioned the conflict between empire and papacy. Ralph of Diceto and Ralph Niger did not make any explicit association at all. The only connection in the work of Roger of Howden is to be found in the papal letter announcing the Peace of Venice.⁸¹ Perhaps they all took that connection for granted, but they certainly treated the clashes between the emperor and the Lombard cities as a subject apart. Only the anonymous eyewitness of the Peace of Venice and Gervase of Tilbury underlined that connection, but the work of the former is an account of the settlement between empire and papacy, whose mutual relations are also the main topic of that section of Gervase's work.

[A head] John of Salisbury and Thomas Becket

⁸⁰ A. Duggan and C. Duggan, *Ralph de Diceto, Henry II and Becket (with an appendix on decretal letters)*, in *Authority and Power. Studies on Medieval Law and Government Presented to Walter Ullman*, ed. B. Tierney and P. Linehan, Cambridge, 1980, pp. 59–81.

⁸¹ *Howden Chronica*, pp. 141–2.

In point of fact, John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* shows that English interest in the Lombard cities predated the conflict between empire and papacy to some extent, as testified by its inclusion of an account attributed to an unnamed Placentine host with whom John openly concurred. By highlighting the *libertas* and the autonomy of the Italian cities, it strikes a chord with the text later produced by William of Newburgh. Yet the *Policraticus* focused on the political foundations of the city communes, rather than on regional politics. John's unnamed host, with whom he stayed at Piacenza, stated that 'the merits of the people cancel all princely regimes' or cause them to be 'administered with the greatest mildness'; this follows the depiction of the Italian cities as a well-known case in which, as long as their inhabitants cherished peace, cultivated justice and refrained from perjury, they rejoiced in such liberty and peace that 'there was nothing at all, or very little, that disturbed their calm'. On the other hand, frauds and divisions caused by injustice brought the Lord to call down upon them 'either the arrogance of the Romans or the *furore* of the Germans, or some other punishment', the only remedy being penitence and a return to the path of justice.⁸² Those are certainly references to the emperor and, perhaps, even the papacy.

⁸² *Ioannis Saresberiensis Policraticus*, ed. K.S.B. Keats-Rohan, Turnhout, 1993, p. 271: 'Ospitem meum Placentinum dixisse recolo, uirum utique sanguine generosum, habentem prudentiam mundi huius in timore Domini, hoc in civitatibus Italiae usu frequenti celeberrimum esse quod, dum pacem diligunt et iustitiam colunt et perusiis abstinent, tantae libertatis et pacis gaudio perfruuntur, quod nichil est omnino quod vel in minimo quietem eorum concutiat. Cum vero prolabantur ad fraudes et per uarian iniustitiae semitas scinduntur in semet ipsis, statim vel fastum Romanum vel furorem Teutonicum aliudue flagellum inducit Dominus super eos, et permanet manus eius extenta donec ipsi ab iniquitate per paenitentiam reuertantur. Quo solo remedio apud illos omnis cessat tempestas. Adiciebat etiam quod merita populi omnem euacuant principatum aut eum faciunt esse mitissimum, cum e contrario certum sit quod propter peccata populi permittit Deus regnare hypocritam, et impossibile esse ut diu regno gaudeat qui in populi humiliatione et proprio fastigio superbe nimis exultat. Sed illius dicebat protendi principatum qui apud se de conscientia humilitatis semper in se angitur,

John produced the *Policraticus* during the reign of Barbarossa, but between 1156 and autumn 1159, that is, before the unfolding of the conflict between empire and papacy. He probably gathered the information for his account during one of his journeys to Rome, the last of which, before his attendance at the Third Lateran Council in 1179 as bishop of Chartres, was in 1158 to early 1159.⁸³ Piacenza was on the Via Francigena, the common route of English travellers to Rome, as was Siena, where John also stopped.⁸⁴ Both cities featured in the tenth-century itinerary of Sigeric of Canterbury.⁸⁵ Piacenza was the main ally of Milan during its early struggles with the emperor in the 1150s, which would explain the attitude of John's host towards the emperor.⁸⁶

In the *Policraticus*, however, the passage on the Italian cities provided a wider reflection on the role of kings and even on their necessity. The latter is an element of John's reflections on which scholarship has paid surprisingly little or no attention, focusing as it has on his treatment of kingship rather than on the necessity of monarchic rule in the first place.⁸⁷ However, John did not expand on this idea, and his thoughts on the Italian cities also served to suggest how a mild princely regime could

quasi regent invuitus. Haec michi Placentinus hospes, et, ut credo, fidei consentaneum est'.

For the translated passages: John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, trans. C. J. Nederman, Cambridge 1990, p. 60.

⁸³ C. J. Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, Tempe, 2005, p. 53.

⁸⁴ JohnS, *Letters*, ii, no. 240.

⁸⁵ R. Stopani, *Le vie di pellegrinaggio nel medioevo*, Florence, 1991, pp. 43–56.

⁸⁶ Raccagni, *The Lombard League*, p. 20.

⁸⁷ For the bibliography on John's *Policraticus*: Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, 92–4, which also examines its content at pp. 60–73. To my knowledge the lines on the Italian cities have only been considered in R. Manselli, *Giovanni di Salisbury e l'Italia del suo tempo*, in *The World of John of Salisbury*, ed. M. Wilks, Oxford, 1994, pp. 401–14, but not in relation to John's treatment of kingship or to the rest of the *Policraticus*. On John's view of the emperor: T. Reuter, *John of Salisbury and the Germans*, in *The World of John of Salisbury*, pp. 423–5.

be secured. Likewise, the section of the *Policraticus* in which the Italian cities are considered is generally devoted to the relationship between kingship, justice and merit. At the same time, the reference to the Italian cities immediately follows a brief reflection on how ‘the history of kings’ showed that ‘a king was sought from God for the reason that he might sustain the burdens of the whole people in the manner of the gentiles’, and became necessary when ‘Israel was a transgressor in the manner of the gentiles, in so far as it did not seem to be content with God for its king’.⁸⁸ This is probably a reference to 1 Samuel 8. The ensuing account of John’s Placentine host not only provided further elucidation on those lines, but was also one of the rare contemporary examples to be found in the section of the *Policraticus* known as the ‘statement book’, and the only such reference in book four. This suggests that John did not consider the absence of monarchic rule as an exhausted experience, and that the Lombard cities influenced his views.

Elsewhere the *Policraticus* features other references to Lombardy, including a remark on the military organisation of its cities, an awareness of the distinction between *Lombardi* (the northern Italians) and *Longobardi* (the inhabitants of the former Lombard duchies of the south), and the legend of the foundation of towns by the Gallic chieftain Brennus.⁸⁹

After the *Policraticus* John frequently touched upon the contest between Barbarossa and the Lombards in his letters, which, together with Becket’s correspondence, are one of the main surviving sources on this subject. A comparison

⁸⁸ *Ioannis Saresberiensis Policraticus*, p. 270: ‘Regum scrutare historiam, ad hoc petitem regem a Deo inuenies ut praecederent facies populi et proeliaretur bella eorum et, ad similitudinem gentium, totius populi onera sutineret. Qui tamen non fuerat necessarius, nisi et Israel praeuaricatus esset, in similitudinem gentium, ut Deo rege sibi non uideretur esse contentus’. For the translation: John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, p. 60.

⁸⁹ Manselli, *Giovanni di Salisbury*.

between the letters and the chronicles reveals that, despite some thematic similarities, their coverage of Lombard affairs does not entirely match. The collections, for example, cover the period from 1163 to 1170, thus ignoring episodes such as the destruction of Milan, the siege of Alessandria or the Battle of Legnano, which featured so prominently in the chronicles. That is explained by the fact that those collections comprised letters written during the Becket affair or in its immediate aftermath. The letters also refer to some cities that the chronicles ignore, such as Parma, Cremona and Bologna.

Overall, the letters are particularly valuable regarding the lull between the formation of the Veronese League in 1164 and the extension of the uprising to the rest of northern Italy a couple of years later. A letter from May 1164 sent to Becket by his representative at the papal court carried a reference to *libertas* that is markedly similar to that of the chronicles, stating that the relations between Barbarossa and the Lombard cities had deteriorated so much that they were threatening to abandon him if he did not change his tyrannical attitude and adopt a more civilised one, so that they could regain the liberty they had enjoyed under his predecessors.⁹⁰ Another letter to Becket, this time sent by an anonymous friend in July, pointed to the growing rebelliousness of the Lombards a long time before the rebellion really took hold in Lombardy.⁹¹ A third letter to Becket, this time written in May 1165 by Cardinal Otto of Brescia, reported attempts to unite the cities in a '*confederatio*'.⁹² Then, in June 1166, John of Salisbury wrote to Bartholomew, bishop of Exeter, reporting that

⁹⁰ CTB, I, no. 29: '*nisi deponat tirrannidem et civiles induat mores, ut liberi esse possint, sicut in diebus aliorum imperatorum*'.

⁹¹ Ibid., n. 33.

⁹² Ibid., no. 47.

Cremona and eight other cities had rebelled against Barbarossa.⁹³ Italian chronicles hinted at mounting tensions between Barbarossa and his former allies, but the first documentary evidence of the insurrection of Cremona and its neighbouring cities is dated 1167.⁹⁴

The letters also tended to link Barbarossa's conflict with the cities to that against the papacy more directly than the historical works but, again, their central theme was the Becket affair. Becket's fortunes were linked to Alexander's, which, in turn, depended on Barbarossa's fortune in Lombardy. In late 1167, John of Salisbury wrote an emphatic letter to William Brito, sub-prior of Christ Church in Canterbury, stating that Alexander III had excommunicated Barbarossa, taken his royal authority from him and freed the Italians from the oath of fealty, making them quick to rise against the emperor.⁹⁵ John was aware that Barbarossa still had supporters in Lombardy, as testified by a letter he sent to Baldwin, archdeacon of Totnes, in April/May 1168, which is the most detailed account of the period between late 1167 and the beginning of 1168, when the emperor was forced to flee beyond the Alps.⁹⁶

Of the following events, however, the letters only report the foundation of Alessandria;⁹⁷ the overthrow of the pro-imperial clergy;⁹⁸ offers of bribes from Henry II to various cities for their help against Becket;⁹⁹ and the round of negotiations

⁹³ JohnS, *Letters*, ii, n. 168.

⁹⁴ Raccagni, *The Lombard League*, pp. 29–54.

⁹⁵ JohnS, *Letters*, ii, no. 242.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 272.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 276.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 239–40.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 290; CTB, no. 216, 217.

between the pope, the Lombards and the emperor from the end of 1169 to the beginning of 1170.¹⁰⁰

[A head] Lines of communication

Some of the authors of the accounts mentioned above spent time in Italy during the reign of Barbarossa, including John of Salisbury, but also, as we shall see, Roger of Howden, Ralph of Diceto, Gervase of Tilbury and, of course, the anonymous eyewitness of the Peace of Venice. The lines from the *Policraticus* examined above feature an excellent representation of interaction with the locals.

The same, however, did not apply to other authors, including those of two of the fullest accounts, that is, Robert of Torigni and William of Newburgh. Indeed, it was not necessary to travel to Italy to acquire information about the country's situation. This is clearly testified by the letter that John of Salisbury sent to William Brito in late 1167, in which, after reporting the spread of the Lombard rebellion, he wrote:

[EXT] Why do I tell you what you know already? Everywhere news of this is being loudly proclaimed. Everyone, I think, knows it, save only those perhaps who live apart from the crisis of the age, exiles in their own home.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ JohnS, *Letters*, ii, no. 298.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., no. 242, including the translation: 'Sed quid nota recenseo? Hoc ubique locorum fama quasi praeconia voce concelebrat, nec aliquibus dubium puto, nisi forte lateat illos qui soli tempestate hac exulant domi suae'.

These lines suggest that relevant information flowed freely between Italy and the Angevin empire. This was probably one of the reasons why, despite covering a similar range of events, the historical works examined often featured different details. Nonetheless, the correspondence of John of Salisbury and Becket provide some significant indications. When Cardinal Otto informed Becket of the looming Lombard rebellion in 1165 he was forwarding the content of a letter that the papal curia had just received from Genoa.¹⁰² In the letter from April/May 1168 where John described Barbarossa's recent debacles in Italy, he underlined the fact that some of 'our people' witnessed them first-hand ('*de nostratibus quidem viderunt*'). These were canons of Noyon, envoys of Count Henry of Champagne and emissaries of the king of England. The canons and the royal envoys were officially in Italy for other business, but those of the count were expressly 'investigating the state of the empire' ('*statum explorabat imperii*').¹⁰³ In other cases John gave the source of his information as a plain 'it is said' ('*dicitur*').¹⁰⁴

Moreover, some of the main channels through which news travelled can be clearly identified, and in this respect the papal curia was certainly the principal hub. The contacts between the curia and England have been extensively studied elsewhere.¹⁰⁵ Geographically, the curia was particularly close to the Angevin empire between 1162 and 1165 because of Alexander III's exile in France, where various

¹⁰² CTB, no. 47.

¹⁰³ JohnS, *Letters*, ii, no. 272.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 168.

¹⁰⁵ Among the most recent works: A. Duggan, *Henry II, the English church and the papacy, 1154-76*, in *Henry II. New Interpretations*, pp. 154-183; N. Vincent, *Beyond Becket: King Henry II and the papacy (1154-1189)*, in *Pope Alexander III. The Art of Survival*, pp. 257-300.

Lombard clerics joined him after the imperial victories of 1162.¹⁰⁶ Jocelin of Brakelond's account of the journey of Samson of St Edmund to Rome before Alexander's exile underlines the dangers, including imprisonment, mutilations and even hanging, that pro-Alexandrine clerics, and especially messengers, could face while crossing northern Italy.¹⁰⁷ Becket's correspondence clearly shows the role of news hub played by the curia, especially a letter sent to him in May 1164 by his representative at Sens. It mentioned that a letter had arrived from Italy as well as reports brought by Italians providing news, although their contents were passed to Becket's representative not by his allies at the curia but by strangers.¹⁰⁸

Indeed, given the geographical distance between Italy and England, information had to cross other territories first, the most direct route being through the kingdom of France, with which the Angevin empire was inextricably associated. The best example comes again from the letters of Becket and John of Salisbury: Becket's messenger at the papal curia at Sens specified that his information regarding Italy also derived from reports brought to the French king, Louis VII, by Frenchmen returning from Apulia; while John's reference to the canons of Noyon and the envoys of the count of Champagne has been mentioned above. The role of Benedict, abbot of San Michele of Chiusa, at the border between Italy and France, will be considered shortly. During most of the conflict, John of Salisbury himself was based at Reims, where he enjoyed the patronage of the local archbishop, who was King Louis's brother; however, he learned of Barbarossa's flight from Italy during a pilgrimage to Saint-

¹⁰⁶ A. M. Ambrosioni, *Alessandro III e la Chiesa Ambrosiana*, in *Miscellanea Rolando Bandinelli papa Alessandro III*, ed. F. Liotta, Siena, 1986, pp. 3–41.

¹⁰⁷ C. Harper-Bill, *The diocese of Norwich and the Italian connection, 1198-1261*, in *England and the Continent in the Middle Ages: Studies in Memory of Andrew Martindale. Proceedings of the 1996 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. J. Mitchell and M. Moran, Stanford, 2000, pp. 75–89.

¹⁰⁸ CTB, no. 29.

Gilles, close to Nîmes, in the early months of 1168.¹⁰⁹ King Louis himself played a fundamental role both in the conflict between empire and papacy and in the Becket affair, since Becket stayed in France under his protection.¹¹⁰

An enlightening example of how interest for Lombard affairs touched the Continental possessions of the English royal court can be found in the poems of the troubadour Bertran de Born. He came from the Limousin, in the duchy of Aquitaine, which Henry II ruled by virtue of his marriage to Duchess Eleanor of Aquitaine. Yet Bertran was so close to the royal court that, in the late Middle Ages, he was thought to be English.¹¹¹ He never set foot in Italy, but often referred to the conflicts between Barbarossa and the Lombard cities in his works, likening them to conflicts that took place in his native lands in the 1170s and the 1180s. In a poem that was probably prompted by Henry II, Bertran wrote that the Gascons had formed a covenant among themselves 'like the Lombards' against the king, but preferred to be coddled by a king (Henry II or Henry the Young King?) than forced by a count (possibly Aimar V of Limoges), thus attracting Bertran's sympathies.¹¹² On similar lines, another poem refers to the 'little Lombardy' of Count Aimar of Limoges, likening the situation in the Limousin to that in Lombardy and underlining the ability of Henry II to court and

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. no. 272.

¹¹⁰ J. Dunbabin, *Henry II and Louis VII*, in *Henry II. New Interpretations*, pp. 47–62; B. Galland, *Les relations entre la France et l'empire au XIIIe siècle*, in *Die Staufer im Süden: Sizilien und das Reich*, ed. T. Kölzer, Sigmaringen, 1996, pp. 57–92.

¹¹¹ *The Poems of the Troubadour Bertran de Born*, ed. and transl. W. D. Paden, T. Sankowitch and P. H. Stäblein, Berkeley, 1986, p. 77.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 209: 'Li Gascon si son acordat / entr'elhs e ves lui revelat / quon aissilh de Lombardia. / Mai volon esser be menat / per rey que per comte forssat. / D'aitan lur trac garanteia'.

control that region.¹¹³ Finally, a third poem directly mentions the conflict between ‘that fox of an emperor’ and the Lombards, noticing that fear of Barbarossa had not stopped the Lombards from building a settlement upstream from Cremona, which obviously referred to Alessandria. The rest of the stanza then underlined how Count Raymond of Toulouse was honoured in Lombardy since he had allied himself to the king, which probably referred to Henry II or his son Henry the Young King, thus providing unique evidence of little-known ‘international’ connections of the Lombards.¹¹⁴ Overall, it is interesting to note the iconic role that the League enjoyed in Bertran’s eyes; he, ignoring its links with the papacy and its distinctive urban features, virtually portrayed it as the quintessential example of a covenant formed by subjects against their rulers.

Germany and its imperial court were probably another source of information. Barbarossa and Henry II had frequent diplomatic exchanges, with Henry switching his support between empire and papacy according to his needs. Before 1167 those exchanges were led by no less a person than the imperial chancellor, Rainald of Dassel; they reached a climax in 1165, when Rainald visited Normandy and England, followed by the attendance of an English delegation at the Diet of Würzburg.¹¹⁵ John of Oxford, a faithful royal agent, led it, and, as we shall see, was also sent to Italy

¹¹³ Ibid.: ‘Mon chant vir vas n’Azemar; / qui s’onor en sabria, / cui nostre seigneur car. / Sa pauca Lombardia tant gen sap dompnier, / qe no punto is camjia ni s’enbroigna / per menassas; anz ressoigna, / Lemozin fai reserar’.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 117: ‘E l volpill de l’emperador / volian Lombart envazir; / e ja non laisson pe paor / sobre de Cremona bastir, / quel coms Raimons es sai honratz / car ab lo rei / s’es novellamen afiatz’.

¹¹⁵ J. P. Huffman, *The Social Politics of Medieval Diplomacy. Anglo-German Relations (1066-1307)*, Ann Arbor, 2000, pp. 57–132; see also: P. Godman, ‘Transmontani. Frederick Barbarossa, Rainald of Dassel, and cultural identity in the German empire’, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, 132 (2010), pp. 200–29.

shortly afterwards.¹¹⁶ Patrick Geary, for instance, has suggested that those exchanges were the source of Robert of Torigni's information regarding the transfer of the relics of the Magi from Milan to Cologne.¹¹⁷ Yet Anglo-German contacts were also abundant during the reigns of Richard I and John, and they influenced English historians working in that period too.¹¹⁸ Gervase of Tilbury is a very good example of a man who moved between countries and courts; he put together his *Otia imperialia* for Emperor Otto IV, himself a grandson of the English Henry II.¹¹⁹ Such contacts between England and Germany can help to explain the similarities between English and German sources, noted above, such as those of Robert of Torigni and William of Newburgh, as well as some of the information found in the historical works. Did Robert of Torigni gain the information about Barbarossa's Italian revenues in the years leading to 1164 directly from Rainald of Dassel during his visit to Normandy in 1165?

The above-mentioned letter from Becket's representative at the papal curia mentioned news acquired from travellers returning from southern Italy. They were French, but contacts between England and southern Italy were not lacking.¹²⁰ The latter was en route to the Holy Land as, shortly afterwards, the eventful crusade of Richard Lionheart clearly testified: starting from Marseilles he sailed to the Holy Land

¹¹⁶ C. Harper-Bill, 'John of Oxford, diplomat and bishop', in *Medieval Ecclesiastical Studies in Honour of Dorothy M. Owen*, ed. M. J. Franklin and C. Harper-Bill, Woodbridge, 1995, pp. 83–106.

¹¹⁷ Geary, *Living with the dead*, 243–56.

¹¹⁸ Huffman, *The Social Politics of Medieval Diplomacy*, pp. 133–77; J. Gillingham, *William of Newburgh and Emperor Henry VI*, in *Auxilia Historica. Festschrift für Peter Acht*, ed. W. Koch, Munich, 2001, pp. 51–71.

¹¹⁹ Banks, *Tilbury, Gervase of*.

¹²⁰ G. A. Loud, 'The kingdom of Sicily and the kingdom of England, 1066–1266', in *History*, 88 (2003), pp. 551–5.

via Messina, following the coast of Italy and occasionally going ashore.¹²¹ Partly as a result of the common Norman legacy, various English clerics held important positions at the royal court and in the clergy of the kingdom (including Gervase of Tilbury and Peter of Blois, one of whose letters will be examined later).¹²² The king of Sicily was one of the main allies of Alexander III and at the Peace of Venice the emperor agreed to a truce with him as well as with the Lombards. The historical work of Archbishop Romuald of Salerno, who was chief representative of the king of Sicily at the Peace of Venice, is one of the main sources on the conflict between Barbarossa and the Lombards.¹²³

The contact between the papal curia and the Anglo-Norman world obviously continued after Alexander III's return to Latium, culminating in the Third Lateran Council in 1179, which was attended by Anglo-Norman prelates.¹²⁴ Immediately after the Peace of Constance, English envoys also attended the meeting between Barbarossa and Pope Lucius III at Verona in 1184.¹²⁵ The contacts between the Anglo-Norman world and the papacy, however, long predated the conflicts between Barbarossa and the Lombards, which, furthermore, started under the pontificate of the English pope, Adrian IV. Indeed, his pontificate has been seen as the initiator of an anti-imperial shift that involved plots with the Sicilians and also Milan, although

¹²¹ Stopani, *Le vie di pellegrinaggio nel medioevo*, pp. 24–31; on Lionheart: J. Gillingham, *Richard I*, New Haven, 1999, p. 130.

¹²² Loud, 'The kingdom of Sicily and the kingdom of England'.

¹²³ Romualdo II Guarna, *Chronicon*, ed. C. Bonetti, Cava de' Tirreni 2001; M. Zabbia, *La cultura storiografica dell'Italia normanna riflessa nel 'Chronicon' di Romualdo Salernitano*, in *Progetti di ricerca della Scuola storica nazionale. Contributi alla IV settimana di studi medievali*, ed. I. Bonincontro, Rome, 2009, pp. 5–16.

¹²⁴ G. B. Parks, *The English Traveller to Italy*, vol. 1: *The Middle Ages*, Rome, 1954, p. 117.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

recent scholarship has underlined the role of later pro-imperial sources in shaping that interpretation.¹²⁶

To the existing literature it can added here that some of the cardinals involved in English affairs were also very active in northern Italy, and that, among them, Becket's friends were much closer to the Lombards than those of Henry II.¹²⁷ Becket's allies, for example, included the above-mentioned Otto of Brescia, who was placed in charge of supervising the alliance between the papacy and the Lombards in 1170, but also Manfred of Lavagna, who attended the assembly of the League held in Piacenza in 1172, and Theodwin of San Vitale, who attended the one held at Modena in 1173. They had already been engaged in Lombardy in the last years of Becket's life. Theodwin then attended the assembly of Modena upon his return from a mission to the Angevin dominions during which he negotiated the reconciliation between Alexander III and Henry II after Becket's death, and investigated the miracles related to his tomb.¹²⁸ Of the two main papal legates in northern Italy during the conflict between Barbarossa and the Lombard cities, that is, Archbishop Galdin of Milan and Hildebrand Crassus, the first had followed the papal curia during its exile in France, where Becket was also exiled, and the second consecrated an altar to Becket in

¹²⁶ A. Duggan, '“Totius christianitatis caput”. The pope and the princes', in *Pope Adrian IV, the English Pope (1154-1159)*, ed. B. Bolton and A. Duggan, Aldershot, 2003, pp. 105–56.

¹²⁷ As revealed by a comparison of the cardinals mentioned in the works listed at note 104 with the following ones: A. Duggan, *Becket's Italian network*, in *Pope, Church and City. Essays in Honour of Brenda M. Bolton*, ed. F. Andrews, C. Egger and C. M. Rousseau, Leiden, 2004, pp. 177–204; G. Dunken, *Die politische Wirksamkeit der päpstlichen Legaten in der Zeit des Kampfes zwischen Kaisertum und Papsttum in Oberitalien unter Friedrich I.*, Berlin, 1931; H. Tillmann, *Die päpstlichen Legaten in England*, Bonn, 1926; Raccagni, *The Lombard League*, p. 60.

¹²⁸ Raccagni, *The Lombard League*, p. 60; Duggan, *Becket's Italian Network*, p. 187.

Bologna in 1176.¹²⁹ Another close friend of Becket's was Cardinal Boso, whose biography of Alexander III is one of the main sources about the League.¹³⁰ Among the friends of Henry II, who were less numerous than those of Becket, the most active in northern Italy was William of Pavia, who, rather than attending assemblies of the League, was in touch with imperial supporters and was involved in the negotiations between League, pope and emperor.¹³¹

Becket was also in close contact with other prominent Lombard prelates. They included Omnebene, bishop of Verona, a city that was a faithful member of the League, and Humbert Crivelli, later archbishop of Milan and pope with the name of Urban III.¹³² Humbert was considered an honorary member of Becket's *familia* and came from one of the most prominent families of the Milanese consular aristocracy (a relative of his was consul during the reconstruction of the city). For a time he was archdeacon of Bourges, in Aquitaine, probably following the destruction of Milan in 1162.¹³³

Becket's household included various northern Italians as well, including Arialdo and Roland of Lombardy, and Lombard of Piacenza. Very little is known about the first two, while Lombard joined the household in 1163 and later enjoyed a very significant career.¹³⁴ It is not known how Becket met the three, but one is left wondering whether they belonged to the pro-Alexandrine Lombard diaspora, and whether there was any relation with the resident of Piacenza mentioned in the *Policraticus*.

¹²⁹ Duggan, *Becket's Italian Network*, p. 183

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

¹³¹ See note 105.

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. 193–5.

¹³³ P. Grillo, *Urbano III*, in *Enciclopedia dei papi*, II, Rome, 2000, pp. 301–14.

¹³⁴ Duggan, *Becket's Italian Network*, pp. 188–92.

Becket might have also met them at Bologna, which, to some extent, was probably another hub. The city was a prominent member of the League from 1167, and throughout the twelfth century its law schools, which had excellent links with the papacy, saw a constant coming and going of young English clerics.¹³⁵ The altar that Cardinal Crassus dedicated to Becket in the Bolognese Church of S. Salvatore in 1176 was associated with the local community of English students, who soon petitioned to enlarge it into an enclosed chapel.¹³⁶ Becket himself had studied at Bologna for a time, and the same applies to other people mentioned here, from Peter of Blois to Baldwin of Exeter.¹³⁷ Some English students at Bologna during Barbarossa's reign can be identified too. They included Gervase of Tilbury, and, in the late 1160s to early 1170s, three canons of St Paul's in London (the institution to which Ralph of Diceto was affiliated): Robert Bancaster, Richard Foliot, and Master David of London, who supervised them. The first two were nephews of Gilbert Foliot, bishop of London and one of Becket's main opponents, and kept in touch with their uncle. The surviving letters did not refer to politics, but one of them summoned Richard

¹³⁵ S. Kuttner and E. Rathbone, 'Anglo-Norman canonists of the twelfth century: an introductory study', *Traditio*, 7 (1949-51), pp. 279-358; for the links with the Papacy: I. S. Robinson, *The Papacy, 1073-1198: Continuity and Innovation*, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 220-2.

¹³⁶ A. Allaria, 'English scholars at Bologna during the middle ages', *The Dublin Review*, 112 (1893), pp. 74-5; M. G. Murolo, 'Gli studenti inglesi e san Tommaso Becket loro patrono', *Strenna storica Bolognese*, 36 (1987), pp. 293-317.

¹³⁷ R. W. Southern, *Blois, Peter of (1125x30-1212)*, in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22012>, accessed 28 June 2013; C. Holdsworth, *Baldwin (c.1125-1190)*, in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1164>, accessed 28 June 2013.

back to England around 1168, at the early stages of the League, because he deemed Bologna injurious to his health.¹³⁸

Apart from supervising the canons, Master David represented his bishop and king at the papal curia concerning Becket's excommunication of prominent English figures in 1169, and again in the aftermath of Becket's murder, when Ralph of Diceto joined his diplomatic mission.¹³⁹ As we have seen, however, the coverage of Lombard affairs in Diceto's work mainly focused on later events. The bishop of London himself, who was one of the recipients of Becket's excommunications, went to Italy; he received news of his absolution while in Milan in 1170.¹⁴⁰

The Peace of Venice probably played an important role in the transmission of information regarding Lombardy as well. It is mainly known for sealing the peace between Barbarossa and Alexander III, but it also saw the participation of delegations from all over Western Christendom. Moreover, while Barbarossa had already reached a general agreement with Alexander, the same did not apply to the Lombards, whose negotiations with the emperor were one of the main issues discussed at Venice. Consuls, *podestà* and various other prominent citizens of at least twenty cities of the League came to the peace conference, together with large retinues (Cremona alone sent ten consuls with ninety-five men).¹⁴¹ At the same time, numerous English representatives attended also. They included a delegation jointly sent by the kings of

¹³⁸ *The Letters and Charters of Gilbert Foliot*, ed. Z. N. Brooke, D. A. Morey and C. N. L. Brooke, London, 1967, pp. 260–4.

¹³⁹ C. N. L. Brooke, *London, David of (d. 1189)*, in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/53482>, accessed 28 June 2013; Z. N. Brooke, 'The register of Master David of London', in *Essays in History Presented to Reginald Lane Poole*, ed. H. W. C. Davis (1927), pp. 227–45; Mason, *Diceto*.

¹⁴⁰ *Diceto*, p. 337.

¹⁴¹ *Historia Ducum Veneticorum*, ed. H. Simonsfeld, in *MGH, Scriptores in folio*, 14, pp. 84–9.

England and France, composed of thirteen men and led by the Cistercian abbot Hugh of Bonnevaux, who played an important role as mediator between the warring parties.¹⁴² Then there was also another delegation from Henry II himself, comprising an unknown number of clerics and forty-two men.¹⁴³ Gervase of Tilbury and the above-mentioned English anonymous eyewitness were likely to have been part of this group.¹⁴⁴ It is the members of those delegations who probably carried with them information about the later events of the conflict between Barbarossa and the Lombard cities, especially on the Battle of Legnano, including the Milanese letter that Ralph of Diceto inserted in his work.

Yet the English royal court was also in contact with Lombard lords and cities directly. The poem by Bertran de Born mentioned above hinted at the existence of good relations between the Angevins and Lombardy. Around 1166, Marquis William of Montferrat, probably the greatest lord in northern Italy, sent envoys to Henry offering help against Becket in return for the marriage between his son and one of Henry's daughters. The only surviving evidence is a letter from John of Salisbury to Bishop Bartholomew of Exeter, dated July 1166, according to which Abbot Benedict of San Michele of Chiusa and the bishop-elect of Ivrea led the embassy, and Henry sent back with them John Cumin (archdeacon of Bath), Ralph of Tamworth (a chancery clerk) and John of Oxford.¹⁴⁵ These negotiations came to nothing, but another English embassy was in Lombardy in late 1167 to early 1168, officially in order to arrange a marriage between the son of a local marquis and the sister of the

¹⁴² Ibid., pp. 83–4.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 87.

¹⁴⁴ *Tilbury*, pp. 460–1; S. E. Banks, *Tilbury, Gervase of (b. 1150s, d. in or after 1222)*, in *ODNB*, accessed 11 April 2013; Thomson, *An English Eyewitness*, pp. 1–29.

¹⁴⁵ JohnS, *Letters*, ii, no. 242

Scottish king.¹⁴⁶ A couple of years later Benedict of Chiusa performed another similar mission, this time for Count Humbert of Savoy-Maurienne regarding the marriage of his heiress to Henry's son John. This led to a formal agreement at meetings held at Montferrand and Limoges in early 1173, which were also attended by the marquis of Montferrat, who was the count's uncle and, by then, a member of the League.¹⁴⁷

It is worth expanding on the role of Benedict of San Michele of Chiusa, because his abbey had very strong 'international' links, especially in France, played an important role in pilgrimage routes, and was in contact with other important monasteries consecrated to Saint Michael across Europe, including Mont Saint-Michel in Normandy.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, Abbot Benedict visited Mont Saint-Michel in 1172, probably in the wake of his second mission to the Angevin court. On that occasion he attended, together with papal legates (including Cardinal Theodwin), an assembly of Norman bishops that discussed Henry's reconciliation with Alexander III following Becket's murder, and he also exchanged letters of association between his abbey and Mont Saint-Michel itself.¹⁴⁹ This means that Benedict and Theodwin met Robert of Torigni, who mentioned Benedict's visit in his chronicle.¹⁵⁰

Despite their closeness to the pro-Becket cardinals, the Lombard cities were also involved in schemes directed against Becket. Again we have only epistolary evidence: in a letter to Hugh de Gant from the end of August 1169 John of Salisbury

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., no. 272.

¹⁴⁷ Torigni, p. 250; *Recueil des actes de Henri II*, ed. L. Delisle and E. Berger, Paris, 1916-27, I, no. 455; Raccagni, *The Lombard League*, pp. 46-7.

¹⁴⁸ *Culte et sanctuaires de saint Michel dans l'Europe médiévale*, ed. P. Bouet, G. Otranto and A. Vauchez, Bari, 2007.

¹⁴⁹ A. Duggan, 'Ne in dubium. The official record of Henry's II reconciliation at Avranches, 21 May 1172', *English Historical Review*, 115 (2000), p. 649.

¹⁵⁰ Torigni, p. 254.

claimed that, by means of an embassy (*'transmissa legatione'*), Henry had offered money to Milan, Bologna, Parma, Cremona and Bologna, and help to the Milanese to repair their defensive walls, in return for pressure on the pope against Becket.¹⁵¹

Becket himself commented upon that in letters to cardinals in which he wondered how he had offended those cities.¹⁵² Unfortunately, the letters did not specify who Henry's legates were on those occasions. Yet, as mentioned above, David of London was at Bologna and was acting as Henry's representative during that period. There might have been links with Lombard bankers too, but the first direct evidence of dealings between them and the English royal dynasty starts a little later.¹⁵³

The contacts with the Lombard cities went both ways as well. In a letter sent to Geoffrey, son of Henry II and bishop of York after 1189 (King Richard made Geoffrey accept that position), Peter of Blois (another cleric who moved quite a lot among courts and chancelleries) mentioned that he had personally witnessed the offer of the *'regnum Italiae'* (as we shall see, other sources called it *'regnum Lumbardorum'*) by its 'magnates and people' (*ab ... regni magnatibus et populus*) to Henry II or one of his sons.¹⁵⁴ Gerald of Wales's *De instructione principis* (a work produced in the first quarter of the thirteenth century by a man who was a royal clerk for a dozen years after 1184) confirmed it by stating that Henry entertained the ambition to replace Barbarossa following repeated invitations by the whole of Italy

¹⁵¹ JohnS, *Letters*, ii, n. 290.

¹⁵² CTB, no. 216.

¹⁵³ *I Lombardi in Europa. Nomi, sedi, operatività rapporti con le autorità*, ed. F. Spinelli, Milan, 2006, pp. 143–6; V. L. Pucetti, *Un fantasma letterario. Il 'Re Giovane' del Novellino*, Bologna 2008.

¹⁵⁴ *Petri Blesiensis epistolae*, in *Patrologia latina*, 207, Paris, 1855, no. CXIII: 'Vidimus et presente fuimus ubi regnum Palestinae, regnum etiam Italiae patri vestro, aut uni filiorm suorum, quem ad hoc eligeret, ab utriusque regni magnatibus et populus est oblatum'.

and the city of Rome ('*tam Italia tota quam urbe Romulea saepius invitatus*').¹⁵⁵ An involvement of the Lombard League in this is more than likely, because one of its functions was to aid diplomatic coordination among its members.¹⁵⁶

[A head] The affair of the Lombard/Italian kingdom

English interest in Lombard affairs was keen for many reasons, but scholarship has tended to downplay or overlook the negotiations to transfer the Lombard/Italian kingdom to members of the English royal family.¹⁵⁷ Italian scholarship has entirely ignored them, which is probably linked to the fact that Italian and German primary sources failed to mention them. Italian sources also ignored the similar negotiations that involved the Byzantine emperor Manuel Komnenos, which have attracted far more scholarly attention.¹⁵⁸ The reasons for the silence of Italian sources might have something to do with their city-centric nature, while Italian scholarship has traditionally devoted much more attention to Byzantium than to England.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, for the cities it might have been convenient to refer to the Italian kingdom in speculative negotiations with foreign monarchs, but it was pointless and inconvenient to do it in negotiations among Italian cities and lords because of the long decline of the central institutions of the kingdom. After all, they were fighting Barbarossa's revival of central authority, and the legacy of the kingdom particularly

¹⁵⁵ *Giraldus Cambrensis Opera*, ed. J. S. Brewer, J. F. Dimock and G. F. Warner, London, 1861-91, VIII, p. 157.

¹⁵⁶ Raccagni, *The Lombard League*, pp. 92-102.

¹⁵⁷ For the evolution of the kingdom since Carolingian times: Raccagni, *The Lombard League*, pp. 7-28.

¹⁵⁸ P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, Cambridge, 1993, pp. 83-95.

¹⁵⁹ C. Wickham, 'The sense of the past in Italian communal narratives', in *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-century Europe*, ed. P. Magdalino, London, 1992, pp. 173-90.

identified with its old capital, Pavia, which was his closest ally: he was crowned there twice, in 1154, on the site of the old royal palace and on invitation by its citizens, and then in 1162 to celebrate his victory over Milan.¹⁶⁰ The latter and its archbishop laid some claims on the legacy of the kingdom too, although less robustly: in 1128, at Monza, which was under the hegemony of Milan, the archbishop crowned Conrad of Swabia king of Italy against Emperor Lothar; then in 1186, after the reconciliation with Barbarossa, his son Henry VI was wed and crowned in the Milanese basilica of S. Ambrogio in the presence of envoys from the League.¹⁶¹ The negotiations with Henry II and Manuel suggest that Milan might have played the card of the crown of Italy during the conflict with Barbarossa too. It is worth noting that Manuel is the only other known ruler, apart from Henry, who offered Milan help for the reconstruction of its walls.

In contrast with Italian scholarship, Anglophone scholarship has touched upon the offer of the Italian crown to Henry II, but only very cursorily, and has ignored the parallel negotiations with Manuel Komnenos. At best it has dismissed those negotiations as an Italian ephemeral machination to which Henry barely paid attention, or as a bargaining tool he used against Becket.¹⁶² German scholarship has debated more thoroughly whether Henry pursued an anti-Staufen policy, but focused on his possible imperial pretensions, and the link with the Welf dynasty, rather than on Italy.¹⁶³

There is, however, a source that has not attracted the attention it deserves regarding the affair of the Italian crown, but which is far more informative than any

¹⁶⁰ P. Majocchi, *Pavia città regia*, Rome, 2008, pp. 98–116.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Warren, *Henry II*, pp. 220–1.

¹⁶³ Huffman, *The Social Politics*, pp. 57–132.

other. It is an anonymous chronicle from Laon, just outside the dominions of the Angevins. It was completed around 1218 and is very rich in evidence concerning England, to the extent that an anonymous English Premonstratensian has been suggested as its author. Yet it also has many references to Barbarossa and the Lombard cities too: its coverage of their conflict matching that of the fullest of the English accounts mentioned above. Its significance regarding the affair of the Italian kingdom is manifold: it is the only source reporting both the negotiations with Henry and Manuel, it strongly suggests that they were not that ephemeral and, above all, it provides a chronology of their development and a series of valuable details. Thus, it stated that in 1169 a promise was made to Henry regarding the kingdom of the Lombards (*'illectus promissione regni Lumbardorum'*), presenting it as the reason for the division of his dominions among his sons and for his preference for the marriage proposal between his son John and the heiress of Savoy-Maurienne against a similar one from Byzantium, on the grounds that Maurienne was closer to his lands and commanded the difficult access to Italy. On the latter, the chronicle commented: 'thus most of the people who heard that understood that the king aspired to the kingdom of the Lombards' (*'Tunc maxima pars eorum qui hec audierant intellexit, quod rex ad regnum adspiraret Lumbardorum'*), suggesting that those negotiations were not secret. By 1174, however, Henry had come to regret those choices because 'he had no further hope regarding the Kingdom of the Lombards' (*'eo quod non erat ei ulterius spes ad regnum Lumbardorum'*).¹⁶⁴ In the light of this, one is left wondering whether, to some extent, the detailed accounts of Lombard affairs in English sources (most notably Robert of Torigni's statement on Barbarossa's Italian revenues, for example)

¹⁶⁴ *Chronicon Universalis Anonymi Laudunensis*, ed. A. Cartellieri and W. Stechele, Leipzig, 1909, pp. 13–15.

echoed enquiries pursued by the Angevin court regarding the state of the prospective new kingdom.

English scholarship has rather linked Henry's family arrangements in 1169 to his relations with the French king, and the alliance with Savoy-Maurienne to the situation in southern France, in both cases ignoring Italy.¹⁶⁵ Yet these arguments do not necessarily invalidate the account of the anonymous writer of Laon. Besides, Gerald of Wales corroborated it when he stated that, when Henry was offered Italy, he prepared a corridor to it from his possessions through the valley of Maurienne.¹⁶⁶ It is also worth noting that, despite overlooking the affair of the crown, Robert of Torigni justified that marriage alliance by stating that the count commanded the entrance to Italy.¹⁶⁷ The use by the count, in the record of the alliance, of the title of '*Marchio Italiae*', not the one by which he was commonly known, probably betrayed his wish to highlight that asset.¹⁶⁸ The involvement as broker of Abbot Benedict of Chiusa might have had a symbolic value as well: his fortified monastery dominated the last section of the route to Italy through the Val di Susa, which Charlemagne himself had used to conquer the Lombards: its very name conveying the image of the fortified gate to the peninsula. The involvement of Prince John, who was left out from the division of 1169, strikes a chord with Peter of Blois' statement that the kingdom was offered to Henry or one of his sons.

Unfortunately, the limited sources at our disposal do not provide much detail on how and why the offer of the kingdom was made. As mentioned above, Peter of

¹⁶⁵ Warren, *Henry II*, pp. 108–36, 117, 221; R. Benjamin, 'A forty years war: Toulouse and the Plantagenets, 1156–96', *Historical Research*, 61 (1988), p. 275; C. W. Previté-Orton, *The Early History of the House of Savoy*, Cambridge, 1912, pp. 337–8.

¹⁶⁶ *Giraldus Cambrensis opera*, p. 157.

¹⁶⁷ *Torigni*, p. 250.

¹⁶⁸ *Recueil des actes de Henri II*, I, no. 455; Previté-Orton, *The Early History*, p. 308.

Blois and Gerald of Wales hinted to a Lombard or, indeed, Italian, collective effort, the first generically pointing to Lombard ‘magnates and people’ and the second to ‘the whole of Italy’.¹⁶⁹ Peter of Blois might have witnessed the offer of the crown to Henry II during his journey back to northern Europe after his expulsion from Sicily in 1168 (together with the other northern European members of the retinue of Queen Margaret, the widow of King William I of Sicily), which included a sojourn at Genoa; otherwise he could have come across it in the following years while he was employed as a letter writer by various prominent figures in Angevin politics, including members of Henry’s court.¹⁷⁰ The time frame indicated by the anonymous writer of Laon, that is, 1169–1174, corresponded with the peak of the above-mentioned exchanges between the Angevin court and Lombard lords and cities, and the lowest point in the contacts between Henry and Barbarossa.¹⁷¹ It is quite safe to suggest the involvement of the count of Savoy-Maurienne and that of the marquis of Montferrat, however, all the Lombard cities that had contact with Henry II were, according to John of Salisbury, members of the Lombard League, and, as mentioned above, Milan had some claims over the Lombard crown. Their reported exchanges with Henry were concerned with the Becket affair or, in the case of the two lords, marriage proposals. Yet none of the surviving sources which mention the affair of the Italian crown made any connection with the Becket affair, even if it was more than likely. Gerald of Wales, rather, connected the affair of the kingdom with Henry’s limitless ambitions and ‘the warfare and inexorable discord’ between Barbarossa and his subjects.¹⁷² The chronicle of Laon had just explained the parallel involvement of the Byzantines in

¹⁶⁹ *Petri Blesiensis epistolae* no. CXIII; *Giraldus Cambrensis opera*, p. 157

¹⁷⁰ For the career of Peter of Blois: Southern, *Blois, Peter of*.

¹⁷¹ For those with Barbarossa: Huffman, *The Social Politics*, pp. 57–132.

¹⁷² *Giraldus Cambrensis opera*, VIII, p. 157.

very similar terms: the Lombards offered the crown to Manuel because they felt oppressed by Barbarossa.¹⁷³

None of the sources explain why the transfer of the kingdom of Italy to Henry fell through, but the chronicle of Laon discussed the failure of the negotiations with Manuel: eventually the Lombards foreswore their fealty to him because of the unwillingness of Alexander III to comply with the project and the ‘well-known pusillanimity of the Greeks’.¹⁷⁴ The same reasons, however, did not necessarily apply to Henry, who, for example, did not need to deal with the relations between the Western and Eastern churches, even if the pope had almost certainly the last word regarding him as well. The chronological data provided by the chronicle, however, narrows down the list of possible reasons considerably. Henry had lost hope by 1174, but it was probably still alive in early 1173, when the alliance with Savoy-Maurienne was sealed, money and castles were exchanged, and the bride-to-be was entrusted to his court.¹⁷⁵ This would rule out any direct link between the failure of the affair of the Italian crown and the outcome of the Becket affair, given that Henry and Alexander III had reached a settlement at the council of Avranches in 1172. The marriage alliance with Savoy-Maurienne (and specifically the grant to John, as part of the arrangement, of a series of strategically placed castles claimed by Henry the Young King) helped to ignite what is known as ‘the great rebellion’, which shook Henry’s whole domain and involved his neighbours; however, by 1174, Henry had come out of it victorious.¹⁷⁶ Finally, the heiress of Savoy-Maurienne died less than a year after

¹⁷³ *Chronicon Universalis Anonymi Laudunensis*, p. 12.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁷⁵ *Recueil des actes de Henri II*, I, no. 455.

¹⁷⁶ Warren, *Henry II*, pp. 108–49; M. Strickland, *Réconciliation ou humiliation? La suppression de la rebellion aristocratique dans les royaumes anglo-normand et angevin*, in

the betrothal but the alliance contemplated the possibility of replacing her with her younger sister, though this clause never came into effect probably because of the end of Henry's hopes regarding the Italian kingdom that had played such an important role in bringing about the betrothal in the first place.¹⁷⁷

It seems far more likely that the negotiations fell through because of developments within Italy itself. In 1168 Barbarossa escaped from Italy in disguise, the pope and archbishop of Milan having excommunicated him and released his subjects from the oath of fealty to him.¹⁷⁸ His absence lasted for six years, during which his remaining supporters in the Po Plain were forced to join the League. This wiped out all the governmental structures that he had imposed, leaving behind a vacuum that the League partially filled itself. It was to that vacuum that the negotiations with Henry, which were initiated in 1169 at the latest, and those with Manuel were probably connected. Likewise, the end of Henry's hopes as reported by the anonymous writer of Laon chronologically coincided with Barbarossa's return to Italy in September 1174, to which he gained access, at the head of a strong army, through the valleys of Maurienne and Susa. This implied an understanding with the count of Savoy that cut Henry's corridor to Italy. In fact, the count then played an important role, on the side of the emperor, in the following negotiations with the Lombards. The latter were clearly ready for a compromise too when, despite the evident superiority of their army, they refused to engage the embattled imperial host when it abandoned the long siege of Alessandria. This led to the Truce of Montebello

Images de la Contestation du Pouvoir dans le Monde Normand (Xe-XVIIIe siècle), ed. C. Bougy and S. Poirey, Caen, 2007, pp. 65–78.

¹⁷⁷ *Recueil des actes de Henri II*, I, no. 455; Warren, *Henry II*, p. 221.

¹⁷⁸ *Alexandri III opera omnia*, in *Patrologia Latina*, 200, Paris, 1855, no. 20; *Italia Pontificia*, ed. P. F. Kehr, Berlin, 1906–75, VI/1, no. 57.

in 1175.¹⁷⁹ It eventually paved the way for Barbarossa's later reconciliation with the pope and the Lombards, for which it provided a working draft.¹⁸⁰

[A head]Conclusions

English sources display a remarkable interest and a wealth of information regarding Lombard affairs during Barbarossa's troubled reign. Their coverage varies from the very abundant ones of Robert of Torigni, William of Newburgh, Ralph of Diceto, and of some of the letters of John of Salisbury, to the few lines of other letters of John's and of the accounts of Ralph Niger and Roger of Howden. These sources recorded the main events of the confrontation between the Lombards and the emperor, and, in some cases, provided unique information about it, from Ralph of Diceto's Milanese letter, to Robert of Torigni's account of Barbarossa's revenues, Roger of Howden's geographical coordinates for the Battle of Legnano, or the accounts of the developments between 1164 and 1167 in the letters of John of Salisbury and Becket.

The momentous conflict between Barbarossa and Alexander III certainly played a fundamental role in kindling that interest and spreading that information, and the papal curia acted as the principal hub. Travellers from northern Europe to the papal curia (and the Angevin empire was in close contact with it) generally crossed northern Italy on their way to Rome, thus becoming acquainted with the region and building bonds with its inhabitants. The best examples of this come from John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* and Becket's networks of Italian friends. Yet its strategic position also meant that northern Italy played a key role in the conflicts between empire and papacy: conflicts whose relevance and impact usually touched the whole

¹⁷⁹ Raccagni, *The Lombard League*, pp. 94–6.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 96–103.

of Christendom, thus increasing the audience for Italian affairs. That was surely the case at the time of Barbarossa and Alexander III, whose conflict was also interlaced with and mirrored the Becket affair. This explains the clear sympathy for the Lombard cause found in the correspondence of both John of Salisbury and Becket.

There are innumerable other strands and channels to consider, however, albeit usually interlinked with papal–imperial relations, and some of them can be clearly identified. Northern European travellers to and from Norman Sicily, as well as to and from the wider Mediterranean, usually crossed northern Italy carrying information and news with them (recall the French travellers from Apulia mentioned in the letter to Becket). Likewise, the schools of Bologna had been attracting English students for decades before Barbarossa’s reign. Here the activity of Master David of London as tutor of the Foliot students and envoy at the papal curia elucidates this strand particularly well. Moreover, since the Angevin empire and northern Italy were not neighbours, other regions and actors acted as go-betweens, from Germany to the portions of the kingdom of France that were not under Angevin control. The papal curia in exile, the activity of the abbot of San Michele of Chiusa and that of Rainald of Dassel were surely only the tips of icebergs. Yet during Barbarossa’s reign the Angevin court was also in contact with Lombard cities and lords directly, and for a few years it was involved in negotiations that could have led to Barbarossa’s overlordship being replaced by an Angevin one.

On the other hand, English historical works generally treated the confrontation between Barbarossa and the Lombard cities on its own terms. They showed awareness of the close links between that confrontation and the conflict between empire and papacy, but also that it was not fully coterminous with it. They also accounted for the origins of that confrontation, the political outline of northern Italy as a whole, and

even the political foundations of the city communes themselves. The attitude of their authors varied from John of Salisbury's sympathy for the arguments of his Placentine's host, to William of Newburgh's balanced stance, Robert of Torigni's sympathy for Barbarossa's restoration of central authority, and the more uncomplicated description by Ralph of Diceto. On the whole, their accounts were certainly not unfavourable to the Lombard cities, even though there seems to have been the impression that the autonomy of the Lombard cities probably went too far.

However, by reporting that information the works here considered not only showed a good and widespread awareness of the Lombard model but also, deliberately or not, displayed a clear example of successful resistance against the expansion of central, royal authority, and a case in point of critique against the model of kingship that supported that expansion. This, as we have seen, was a significant issue in England during the reign of Henry II and those of his immediate successors, at the time when the sources here studied were produced. In this respect, the works of Bertran de Born suggest that the peculiar urban features of the Lombard setting did not make the Lombard defiance against the emperor a less relevant example. Indeed, in many ways, the conflict between empire and papacy, and the various other strands mentioned above, helped to spread across Christendom the news of the Lombard defiance against Barbarossa, thus conferring upon Lombardy an iconic status. After all, apart from English sources, accounts of that defiance can be found throughout the Holy Roman Empire, southern Italy and Byzantium, to mention only a few. It is impossible to estimate the direct impact that such knowledge had upon England, but

the issues it touched upon were certainly relevant to England in the decades that led to Magna Carta.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ For the reign of Henry II as a turning point in the genesis of Magna Carta, and the Peace of Constance as one of its Continental counterparts: Holt, *Magna Carta*, pp. 25, 40–5, 47–8, 115–17.